

change, empowering a new generation of African Americans to seize political power, partnering with other disenfranchised communities around the country, and demonstrating that the legacy of slavery and racial oppression still prevented so many from experiencing the promise of prosperity and equality that is the foundation of the American dream.

I must also personally thank former Party Chairwoman Elaine Brown for her bold leadership, for being a strong role model for African American women, and for her friendship. Since 1971 I have witnessed her ability to face challenges with "righteous indignation" and a deep love for all people who lack power in our country. I was proud to work on her trailblazing campaign for Oakland City Council, and learned from her the importance of focusing on issues that have the ability to improve people's daily lives. For that I am deeply grateful.

As we see so apparently every time another young African American is shot by police, the work of the Panthers is far from done. On behalf of California's 13th Congressional District, where the Panthers first came together and where their efforts were headquartered, I extend my sincerest congratulations to the Black Panther Party on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. Thank you to all who continue the work to combat racial oppression, and work for a world of true justice, peace, and equality.

RECOGNIZING MILTON VFW POST  
483, JOHN O. CONNOR POST

**HON. MATT GAETZ**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 13, 2017*

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Milton VFW Post 4833, John O. Connor Post, in Northwest Florida. This month the Post will be celebrating their 50th Anniversary.

For five decades, this Post has been committed to serving our Nation's veterans. In the past year alone, they have made seventeen visits to area hospitals in support of ill or injured veterans, conducted funeral services for two combat veterans, and sponsored two handicap ramps for veterans.

The Post's commendable care for their community is exemplified by some of their service acts including conducting a cleanup and beautification of Strickland Cemetery, prompting other local organizations to follow suit, and placing more than three hundred flags and wreaths on gravesites of local veterans.

The members of Post 4833 have proven their enthusiasm for engaging the youth in our communities by participating in and funding a local Eagle Scout project, overseeing local submissions to the VFW's Voice of Democracy scholarship program, and by briefing the local Boy Scout pack on proper handling of the American flag.

Additionally, Post 4833 has demonstrated impeccable generosity by organizing three major fundraisers in support of veterans in need, sponsored facilities that house the offices for Disabled American Veterans serving in the Pace and Milton area, provided funding to the Veteran's Dive Locker program, assisted two families by providing grant money for temporary lodging, and donated one thousand two hundred dollars for transportation

services of disabled veterans. This year the Post has provided an impressive amount of donations, grants, and assistance; including over eight thousand dollars to Veterans' Programs, three thousand dollars to college grant foundations, and one thousand dollars to summer student leadership courses.

I would like to personally thank all of the members of Milton Post 4833 and specifically recognize the Post's Officers: Post Commander Mike Messer, Senior Vice Commander Bill Ross, Treasurer Chris Williams, and Chaplain Florencio "Cho" Ramirez. Under the officers' leadership, the Post has accomplished increased involvement with community programs and has demonstrated a laudable degree of service for veterans.

On behalf of the United States Congress, I am honored to recognize VFW Post 4833 for their long history of unwavering service to veterans and their community, and sincerely congratulate them on celebrating their 50th Anniversary.

COMMEMORATING 31ST ANNIVERSARY OF REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY

**HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 13, 2017*

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, this Monday, January 16, the nation observes for the 31st time the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday.

Each year this day is set aside for Americans to celebrate the life and legacy of a man who brought hope and healing to America.

The Martin Luther King Holiday reminds us that nothing is impossible when we are guided by the better angels of our nature.

Dr. King's inspiring words filled a great void in our nation, and answered our collective longing to become a country that truly lived by its noblest principles.

Yet, Dr. King knew that it was not enough just to talk the talk, that he had to walk the walk for his words to be credible.

And so we commemorate on this holiday the man of action, who put his life on the line for freedom and justice every day.

We honor the courage of a man who endured harassment, threats and beatings, and even bombings.

We commemorate the man who went to jail 29 times to achieve freedom for others, and who knew he would pay the ultimate price for his leadership, but kept on marching and protesting and organizing anyway.

Dr. King once said that we all have to decide whether we "will walk in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of destructive selfishness."

"Life's most persistent and nagging question," he said, is "what are you doing for others?"

And when Dr. King talked about the end of his mortal life in one of his last sermons, on February 4, 1968 in the pulpit of Ebenezer Baptist Church, even then he lifted up the value of service as the hallmark of a full life:

I'd like somebody to mention on that day Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to give his life serving others," he said. "I want you to say on that day, that I did try in my life . . . to love and serve humanity."

We should also remember that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was, above all, a person who was always willing to speak truth to power.

There is perhaps no better example of Dr. King's moral integrity and consistency than his criticism of the Vietnam War being waged by the Johnson Administration, an administration that was otherwise a friend and champion of civil and human rights.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia on January 15, 1929.

Martin's youth was spent in our country's Deep South, then run by Jim Crow and the Ku Klux Klan.

For young African-Americans, it was an environment even more dangerous than the one they face today.

A young Martin managed to find a dream, one that he pieced together from his readings—in the Bible, and literature, and just about any other book he could get his hands on.

And not only did those books help him educate himself, but they also allowed him to work through the destructive and traumatic experiences of blatant discrimination, and the discriminatory abuse inflicted on himself, his family, and his people.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that we celebrate here today could have turned out to be just another African-American who would have had to learn to be happy with what he had, and what he was allowed.

But he learned to use his imagination and his dreams to see right through those "White Only" signs—to see the reality that all men, and women, regardless of their place of origin, their gender, or their creed, are created equal.

Through his studies, Dr. King learned that training his mind and broadening his intellect effectively shielded him from the demoralizing effects of segregation and discrimination.

Dr. Martin Luther King was a dreamer.

His dreams were a tool through which he was able to lift his mind beyond the reality of his segregated society, and into a realm where it was possible that white and black, red and brown, and all others live and work alongside each other and prosper.

But Martin Luther King, Jr. was not an idle daydreamer.

He shared his visions through speeches that motivated others to join in his nonviolent effort to lift themselves from poverty and isolation by creating a new America where equal justice and institutions were facts of life.

In the Declaration of Independence in 1776, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all Men are Created Equal."

At that time and for centuries to come, African-Americans were historically, culturally, and legally excluded from inclusion in that declaration.

Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" Speech, delivered 53 years ago, on August 28, 1963, was a clarion call to each citizen of this great nation that we still hear today.

His request was simply and eloquently conveyed—he asked America to allow of its citizens to live out the words written in its Declaration of Independence and to have a place in this nation's Bill of Rights.

The 1960s were a time of great crisis and conflict.

The dreams of the people of this country were filled with troubling images that arose